

Board of Supervisors Hearing Date: December 16, 2008
Case Summary: Project No. R2007-00801-(2) (Conditional Use Permit)

Project Applicant: Park Water Company

RPC Hearing & Approval Date: September 24, 2008

Synopsis

The applicant, Park Water Company ("PWC"), has received approval from the Regional Planning Commission for a request to authorize the construction of a 780 foot deep water well to serve the Compton and Willowbrook areas. The project includes a pump house, a salt chlorine and seepage pit for water discharge and a 80-foot Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) communication tower to continuously control devices, monitor, notify and record activities occurring at PWC's active sites in the Compton/Willowbrook area.

Park Water Company obtained a Conditional Use Permit for the construction of a two million gallon water reservoir at the subject site in 1965. The proposed SCADA tower consists of electronic monitoring, controlling and recording of data of all active PWC groundwater wells, reservoirs and purchase water connections. PWC has been using phone lines to communicate between different sites, however, PWC encountered several communication failures related to weather and phone line issues. Therefore, PWC has determined to use radio signal technology through SCADA that will also serve to meet Homeland Security requirements to assure safe and reliable communication and data transmission.

The new system will have two 80-foot high towers with two radio antennas mounted at the top, one is already installed at the headquarters office in Downey at 9750 Washburn Road in the City of Downey, and the other tower would be installed on the subject property adjacent to the reservoir. Two other existing facilities in southeast Los Angeles monitored by this system are the Compton West Water System, and Bellflower/Norwalk water system. Both sites will be monitored and controlled through local computers that are connected to the main office in Downey. In the event of an alarm the computerized systems notify the 24/7 control center operator and on call operators. The radio frequency of SCADA will be 5.8 GHz and a wireless tower (model HD-80) will be installed. The tower would be 5'-6" in diameter and cast in a concrete foundation 14 feet below ground and bolted to the 80 feet high tower. The tower is self supporting and the radio equipment mounted on the top will provide the necessary communication with other sites.

According to the applicant the proposed system is cost effective and it does not incur the high cost of maintaining the digital telephone lines of about \$21,000 per month and meets California Utility Commission requirement of providing low a cost facility with less financial impact on customer rates.

The subject property is located at 1743 E 118th Street in the Willowbrook-Enterprise Zoned District. The property is located within the Willowbrook Community Standards District and the Willowbrook Redevelopment Area. Access to the property is from 118th Street.

Project Proponents

The project received support from the Community Development Commission, the lead agency for the Redevelopment area.

Project Opposition

Staff received opposition to the SCADA tower project from Charles Drew University at the public hearing on September 24, 2008.

Issues

Opponents to this project have raised the following concerns:

- Charles Drew University states that they were not notified of the public hearing and never received information regarding the proposed project until two days prior to the hearing when they saw the notice posted on the subject property.
- That additional time to be granted to look into more alternatives to replace the tower technology
- Newspaper and mail noticing was inadequate or incorrect
- The proposed tower will have a negative visual impact. It will create an urban blight appearance and will adversely affect the view of the surrounding lots owned by Charles Drew University
- The tower presents safety issues during an earthquake, winds and other attacks and has an environmental impact, while no studies have been conducted to prevent potential harm
- The proposed tower and its' visual appearance will have an impact on property values and revenues at Charles Drew University
- The proposed Findings contain inaccurate information
- The applicant's burden of proof contains inaccurate information

These issues raised by the opposition were addressed in the appeal letter, but were not raised at the Planning Commission hearing.

It should also be noted that in recent months the applicant has been working with Charles Drew University to investigate the possibility of PWC using an existing antenna on the roof of Drew's adjacent Cobb Building, instead of erecting a new 80-foot tower.

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